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Revised City Council District Boundaries.

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CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF WICHITA  
KANSAS

City Council Special Meeting  
09:00 a.m. October 30, 2012

City Council Chambers  
455 North Main

**OPENING OF SPECIAL MEETING**

- Call to Order
- Approve the minutes of the regular meeting on October 23, 2012

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**COUNCIL BUSINESS**

**IV. NEW COUNCIL BUSINESS**

1. Revised City Council District Boundaries.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Give direction to staff on how to proceed with the redistricting effort.

Adjournment

**City of Wichita  
City Council Meeting  
October 30, 2012**

**TO:** Mayor and City Council

**SUBJECT:** Revised City Council District Boundaries (All Districts)

**INITIATED BY:** Metropolitan Area Planning Department

**AGENDA:** New Business

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**Recommendation:** That the City Council give staff direction on how to proceed with the redistricting effort.

**Background:** On July 3, 2012, the City Council appointed a Commission of Electors pursuant to Charter Ordinance 173. The Charter ordinance requires that the Commission develop a redistricting plan that meets the requirements of the ordinance, which plan must be submitted to the City Council no later than September 30, 2012. At the City Council Workshop on September 25, 2012, the Commission submitted its suggested plan to the City Council.

The City Council now must reestablish its district boundaries taking into account the Commission's recommendations by December 31, 2012. Reestablishment of the boundaries prior to January is necessary so that the County Election Commissioner has sufficient time to prepare precinct ballots with appropriate changes and to notify any affected voters.

During the discussion among Council Members at the September 25 Workshop, two proposals were made to change the number of current Council Districts. One proposal was to eliminate one Council District and to have both the Mayor and the Vice Mayor elected at-large for four-year, staggered terms. This proposal would reduce the number of Council Districts to five. The other proposal would create two new districts, with the Mayor remaining elected at-large, bringing the total number of Council Districts to eight.

**Analysis:**

**I. Revision of the Number of Council Districts**

Any revision of the number of City Council Districts would require that Charter Ordinance 173 be amended. The Kansas Constitution sets forth the legal requirements to amend a Charter Ordinance. The amendment must be passed by two-thirds of the City Council and then published for two consecutive weeks in the official City newspaper. The amended Charter Ordinance does not take effect until sixty days after its publication.

Even if the City Council passed a Charter Ordinance amendment on November 6, then it could not go into effect until after the December 31 deadline to approve the redistricting. Additionally, during the sixty days following passage, City electors may submit a petition requesting that the ordinance be put to a vote of the people. If this situation would occur, an election would need to be held within ninety days of filing the petition. The County Election Commissioner indicates that an election could not be held within the time period to also allow approval of a redistricting map prior to the December 31 deadline.

Another option for the City Council would be to amend the Charter Ordinance and, upon motion of the City Council, put the amendment to a vote of the people. The costs of a special election would be approximately \$64,000. Again, with this option, a special election could not be held prior to the December 31 deadline. The timing constraints contained in the existing Charter Ordinance make this option infeasible.

Alternatively, changes to the number of districts could be considered after the redistricting of the current Council Districts was completed. Of course, any such changes could not be put into effect for the April 2013 elections and would have to be implemented at the next election. This approach would give staff and Council time to more fully develop the pros and cons of each proposal and for Council Members to receive citizen input. Given how fundamental a change these proposals are to the governing structure of the City, this more deliberative approach may be in order.

## **II. Redistricting Process**

If the City Council chooses to postpone changing the number of districts by Charter Ordinance, it could consider several options in the development and approval of a new redistricting map. First, it could approve the map presented to the Council on September 25. Second, it could give direction to the Commission of Electors to reconvene and present the City Council with additional options. If the Council chooses this approach, then staff would ask Council Members to provide specific feedback on the Commission of Electors' recommendation. Lastly, the City Council could develop its own redistricting map through discussions and evaluation of options with staff.

The City Council schedule for the remainder of the 2012 shows that the Council only has the following five dates on which it could receive public input and take action: November 6th or 20th and December 4th, 11<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup>. Unless the Council holds a special meeting, the deadline for final action actually would be December 18.

**Financial Considerations:** The redistricting process is requiring staff time, materials, supplies, copying and postage costs that were not specifically budgeted for this year. Increasing or reducing the number of Council Districts would increase the budget impact this year and into 2013

**Goal Impact:** The structure of the governing body impacts the fulfillment of all City goals.

**Legal Considerations:** A redistricting map must be approved by the City Council no later than December 31, 2012.

**Recommendations/Actions:** It is recommended that the City Council the City Council give direction to staff on how to proceed with the redistricting effort.

**Attachments:** None.